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Press Release

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Grafenwoehr eyeing housing needs

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GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Hundreds of Families on the waiting list for permanent housing here can expect to be in their assigned units by this fall, thanks to near-continuous construction of new homes and renovations of older units.

Waiting Families began moving into Netzaberg – Grafenwoehr's newest housing area – June 18 and will continue to move into this and other garrison housing areas as units become available, said Albert Schunk, U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr's acting chief of housing.

"We have just acquired 88 units in Netzaberg and we've already committed all of the 88 units to waiting Families. But we still have 332 Families waiting for permanent housing," Schunk said.

He explained that the average wait time for Families to move into permanent housing is two to three months, and that housing assignments are based on rank and bedroom requirements.

For example, the number of children in a Family is one factor in determining what type of unit/how many bedrooms a family will receive. The other factor is grade category. Field grade officers (O-4 and above), for example, are not necessarily eligible for units that senior enlisted noncommissioned officers (E-7 to E-9) may be eligible for.

Director of Public Works Tom Hays said the most in-demand units are typically three- and four-bedroom units.

Hays called the extended waits more of a timing factor than a housing shortage. He said the waits are, in part, due to the annual summer surge, when high numbers of military Families are making permanent-change-of-station moves en masse.

“It really is a matter of timing. If enough people arrive (PCS in) before other people move (PCS out), then we’re going to have these waits. But we are making the assignments from the waiting list, and a fair allocation of houses based on the list,” Hays said.

“Also, we are continuing to have some 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Families arrive here throughout the summer, plus Families from other units that are being stationed here (as part of the transformation),” he explained.

“I understand that people are anxious, but we’re doing our best to get them into quarters as soon as they become available, and we do expect to have enough houses for everyone a little later in the year.”

Hays also said placing waiting Families into private rental quarters for a short period is not an option, and would have a negative impact on future Soldiers.

“If we place people at this time in private rental quarters and then have to move them out in 60 or 90 days, the landlords are going to be very upset,” Hays noted. “They expect one-year leases; they’re not set up as hotels. If we start putting people in their houses for such short periods, they’re not going to want to lease out to Soldiers. So we’re trying to balance that out – what’s best for the Families, the housing market and the Army.”

As of mid-June, 332 Families were on the waiting list for permanent housing. Of them, 114 are residing:

- *in hotels (on or off post);
- *hotel-like accommodations (pensions, bed and breakfasts, etc.); or
- *with Family or friends.

These 114 Families will receive permanent housing first.

Schunk said the remaining 218 Families are residing as follows, in:

- *unaccompanied personal housing (on deferred travel, living in the barracks or senior enlisted quarters depending on rank, or bachelor officer quarters);
- *private rental quarters;
- *government quarters; or
- *temporary quarters (for example: Fitzhum Village, an 84-unit housing area on Vilseck post that was previously cleared out to be renovated. Fitzhum was reopened to temporarily house Families on the wait list, and renovations will begin later this year.)

Schunk said although construction of the total 880 Netzaberg units will continue through next year, as completed units are handed over to the garrison, they will be distributed to waiting Families. He said the garrison expects another 78 Netzaberg units to be handed over in early August, another 82 to be handed over in early September, 76 more in early October, followed by an additional 76 units in mid-October.

But, said Schunk, Families won’t have to wait for the Netzaberg units to open. In preparation for its Efficient Basing Grafenwoehr/ Transformation population boom, Grafenwoehr scheduled the construction of several government-leased housing areas. Much of this construction is ongoing, but is expected to be finished by next year.

The following are among the several government-housing areas newly completed or under construction:

- *Erbendorf (71 units, approximately 9 miles north of Pressath)

- *Kulmain (all 40 units were recently completed and assigned to waiting Families)

- *Steinfels (40 units: 30 have recently been occupied and the remaining 10 units will be handed over to the garrison by the end of July)

Plans have also been approved to transform four large stairwell buildings into large-dwelling units.

Hays said Vilseck buildings 1690, 1695, 1400, and 1405 will be ready for occupancy this fall. Walls will be knocked down in these buildings, he said, to combine and enlarge apartments to help satisfy the garrison's five-bedroom requirements.

Another option being studied by housing officials is to assign Families in high-demand (three-bedroom junior and senior enlisted) categories to categories that have available quarters.

For example, a family with a three-bedroom requirement might be housed in a four-bedroom unit if there is no waiting list for the four-bedroom unit and it fits the Family's grade requirements.

This is called "overhousing" and can help to balance the waiting lists. "However, Hays said, "it must be used on a case-by-case basis to be fair and equitable to everyone."

"We have Soldiers and Families who need to focus on the upcoming deployment," he said. "We will house everyone as soon as we possibly can and with the least hassle.

"Soldiers need to know that housing, DPW and garrison (officials) are as concerned with taking care of the last arriving Families as much as we were for the first arriving Families last summer," Hays said.

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CUTLINE:

NETZABERG

Eighty-eight new homes have been turned over to Families at U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr. (Army photo)

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